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QUAKER HILL
(LOCAL HISTORY)

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XV. In Loving
Remembrance of
Ann Hayes

BY

MRS. WARREN H. WILSON





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IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE
OF
ANN HAYES

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MRS. WARREN H. WILSON

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IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF ANN HAYES.

A little figure with fair white hair parted above a delicate face, stands in an open door, with hands outstretched, and a sweet-spoken word of welcome. It may be she stands in the front door, as you come up the stone steps between the banked lawn; or maybe she waits at the back door, under the spreading apple tree; but you cannot pass without obeying the gently imperious lady; you step in to receive from her some attention, be it only a word of inquiry, showing her friendly interest and knowledge of your life. If you can be prevailed upon to stay, how anxious she is that you have the best chair and how she busies herself that you may be at ease.

How many who pass the white house on the corner still see, in memory, dear Aunt Ann, as we loved to call her, at the door to greet them and are made better

men and women for the vision of this quiet, loving woman. She lives in our hearts and it seems scarcely necessary that anything should be written of a life so recorded; but many have expressed the wish that a tribute be paid to her, and as she was ever ready to serve others, I accept this task gladly for her.

If you drive along the upper road of Quaker Hill, past the Old Meeting House, for a mile or so, you come to a red farmhouse. A century ago, on a fair summer day a slender, bright-faced maiden of seventeen was standing in that doorway, waiting for some one to come riding up the road. Wearied by her watch, she runs out to the orchard to gather some of the luscious pears then ripe. She is scarcely gone when a man of thirty comes riding up on horseback, a pillion behind his saddle. Most energetically does he scold when his lady is not at the gate to mount immediately. Here she comes through the sunshine and shade of the orchard, her hands filled with pears. He bids her mount quickly behind him if she wants to be married that day. Away they ride to the Justice, and thus are John Toffey and Esther Akin made man and wife, and

return to a supper of bread and milk, which was all the wedding feast set forth for them by a step-mother. He took his bride to his home on the S. W. corner of the roads crossing east of Mizzen Top Hotel. He carried on business for years in the store which stood a little west of the present house. Azariah Quimby was in the early days his partner. James Craft clerked there before taking the store two miles north. John Hayes was also a clerk there and conducted a tailor-shop adjoining.

Esther Toffey, or Aunt E., as her friends call her, was a bright, social woman, an excellent story-teller, fond of entertaining; she was a great reader, always keeping a book by her whatever her work.

To John and Esther Toffey were born three children, Polly, who married Dewitt Thomas; Ann, born March 12, 1821, and John James, who died in early manhood.

Ann was a little slip of a girl, with pale blue eyes, and hair so light as to appear almost white. She made frequent visits to a devoted cousin of her mother's, Hannah Holloway Northrop, living in Beekman, who usually furnished her forth with a new gown, made over from her own gen-

erous wardrobe. Ann was nine years old when a son, William, was born to this cousin Hannah, and John Hayes, then at work in his tailor-shop, said to little Ann, "Now your nose is broken; you won't get any more new dresses." When Ann returned from her next visit to Beekman, she could hardly wait to get her little traveling-bag open, and when John Hayes came in to supper, she triumphantly waved a pink silk dress before his eyes, exclaiming:

"Now, is my nose broken!"

Ann first attended the school then standing opposite the present site of Mizzen-Top Hotel. To this school also went Wm. Henry Akin, Miss Mary Akin, Olive Toffey (who later became the wife of Admiral Worden), and others. Mrs. Hayes took great pride in recalling those early school days, and she must have inherited some of her mother's gift of narration for she made the scenes very vivid and real. One of her favorite recollections of those early school days was of Timothy Akin, great uncle to her, and to Margaret and Olive Toffey. He idolized "little Ollie." There stands a stone in the valley marked "Timothy Akin, aged 91," but so

well did Mrs. Hayes tell the story that instead of lying low in the valley, for me, he ever sits on a big stone at the top of the hill, watching the little figure of Olive Toffey as she comes down to school with books and dinner pail. And he is there to meet her in the afternoon as she returns.

It was in this school that Ann Toffey received her only punishment as a pupil. She had spent the noon hour playing around the school yard with her little mates. Just five minutes before school would "take up" again she started home to get something to eat. She met Miss Holloway, the teacher, returning from her lunch. "Where are you going, Ann?" inquired the teacher. Little Ann, thinking she had passed beyond hearing, murmured, "That's my business." She got a bite of bread and butter and was back in her seat when school began, and it was with great interest she heard the teacher say, "There is a little girl present whom I must reprove for her impolite conduct." She looked around to see who it would be and imagine her surprise when she herself was led forward, seated on the dunce stool and adorned with leathern spectacles.

Later the school house was moved to a

site opposite and somewhat north of the present school house; Lydia Holloway, the teacher, comes down to us with this reputation: "Some pupils did not like her, but she made them learn."

She did more than perform the routine expected in every district school; she devoted her spare time and all her noon hours to preparing copy books for her pupils, each different, being the outline of some study pursued by the learner. For instance, Miss Mary Akin's began with early English History, and when she had completed her writing-book, it was a synopsis of her favorite study.

The foundation laid by this true teacher, when built upon by the instruction of Hiram Jones, in his famous school, gave to these early children of Quaker Hill a truly liberal education. Ann Toffey attended the Jones school in the summer session.

A cousin thus writes of Ann Toffey: "A loving, confiding, trusting child, she grew to womanhood with the same nature. On her young shoulders fell cares, and through life it was always the same." The mother's health was none the best after her son's death. The sister, Polly, married Dewitt Thomas and went to Delaware County and



later to Brooklyn to live; her family of five sons and a daughter were very dear to their aunt, Mrs. Hayes; she liked to tell of the stage journeys to Poughkeepsie and on to Delaware County to visit the beloved sister and help in sewing for the little lads.

About 1849 she married the man of her choice, John Hayes, who built for her a large addition to the east of the house. He was a smart man with many sterling qualities, and one great fault; a man of such good judgment that, although a tailor by trade, Albert J. Akin was glad to take him with him when going on a trip to buy cattle. This marriage was not a successful union. Ann's love for her husband, which we have evidence was deep and devoted, conflicted with her love for her parents and the duty she felt she owed them. She never left her early home, where she seemed to be so much needed. John Hayes drifted away and finally died in the west. To her dearest and most confidential friends she never spoke of her heart's experience, but she tasted deeply both the joys and sorrows of love, which helped to give her quick sympathy and understanding with others.

Her father was no business man and

while others with whom he was associated in enterprises prospered, his means dwindled away, and it required the utmost care and exertion on the part of his wife and daughter, Ann, to save a living to them. For over forty years Ann was postmistress of Quaker Hill, or had oversight of the mail.

The "house on the corner" was always a desirable one for boarding. During the civil war, Mrs. Admiral Worden, with her little family, made here her home, in the anxious days when her husband was in the naval service. Mrs. Lew Wallace, a niece of Aunt Esther's, was always glad to spend her summers in this home.

The father died and then the sister, left widowed, returned home with her sons.

Mrs. Hayes was very proud of her brilliant mother and of her sister Polly. She was anxious to have them sit at ease, entertaining their guests and friends, while she took upon herself the duties of a Martha, ever ready to serve. Aunt Esther wrote verses, and one of Mrs. Hayes' greatest treasures was a scrap-book in which her mother and sister had collected favorite poems and written some original ones. I am indebted to Mrs. Ann Vail

for the following verses, composed by Mrs. Esther Toffey for her daughter Ann:

Far over the hill tops above the high mountain,
The King of the country hath made me
an heir.
I shall roam his bright palace and bathe in
his fountain.
What pleasures untold are awaiting me
there!

Every plant of the earth that had fragrance
or beauty,
The angels have carried and transplanted
there:
And I have got one who makes goodness a
duty,
Which will give her to spend an eternity
there.

The mother, Esther Toffey, died July 12, 1879. A cousin who was there writes thus of that sad time:—

“The day before she was buried, I was asked if I would go in the room with all who called to see Auntie. I did by actual count go in with eighty different ones. I was very tired at night and had dropped down on the couch to rest. Ann came and said there was a man in the kitchen wanted to see Auntie. I went out and there stood a big burly Irishman. It was nine o'clock. I took a candle and went the back way to the parlor. He stood looking

at her: the first I noticed he took first one coat sleeve and then the other and wiped the tears from his eyes ; then looking at me said, ' She was good to everyone, even to the likes of me.' That to me was the greatest tribute of respect paid her that day; and I think many both high and low, can say of Ann Hayes, ' She was good to everyone, even to the likes of me.'"

"Good to everyone," that seems to be the keynote of Ann Hayes' character, goodness that was attractive and effective. Her mother writes of her as one who made "goodness a duty." Her friend and cousin, Mrs. Lew Wallace, sends this tribute to her:—

"Beyond all men and women I have known, Anne Toffey Hayes illustrated the power there is in goodness. She was not endowed with gifts to command the admiration of the crowd, was not ambitious to appear well in society, never sang a song for strangers, and when our love began had left behind the graces that wait on early youth. Her outer life was an every day story; yet was there a daily beauty in it, sweet as the voice

—"Of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune."

"In this age of dissatisfied, complaining women, beset with restless fancies, it is

very pleasant to recall one I knew through many years, who never spoke a word of fretfulness or discontent. Her influence was an abiding sweetness that filled the old house on the corner, like eastern perfume. Often have I gone to her for comfort and was given the room, like the blessed one in the stately Palace called Beautiful, where the old Pilgrim slept, and Mercy dreamed her glorious dream ; its window opened toward the sun rising ; the name of the chamber was Peace."

To each person coming to this life-long home of hers, she seemed to give just what they needed. Her cousin, Mrs. Wheeler, thus tells of her first visits to Quaker Hill:--

"The arrival at Aunt E.'s after a long tedious ride on the cars was welcomed with joy by a restless child. How vividly I recall with what impatience I watched for the last turn in the long hill that would bring us in sight of the white house where, in spite of wind or weather, Cousin Ann was always on the horse-block to meet us. To all who knew and remember Aunt E. her strong personality needs no comment, and her welcome and hospitality is not to be forgotten ; but it is the patient, modest little figure in the background (during her mother's lifetime) that stands out even beyond the cleverness of the mother.

"It would take altogether too much time to relate instances that come trooping to my mind of Cousin Ann's unselfishness

and kindness during those visits ; her constant effort to do something for one's pleasure and comfort. It was Cousin Ann who played games with us, kept an endless supply of cookies on hand, always had little kittens ready for us in the woodhouse ; and even the rainy days were ones of delight in the endless resources of the attic.

"Then how I recall later when we moved up as neighbors, her thoughtfulness and kindness to my mother, at that time a confirmed invalid ! Cousin Ann possessed wonderful ability to be the friend and companion of old and young alike. I was at the time of our coming back as residents of Quaker Hill in the height of my girlhood, and yet there was no one I would go to with my joys and sorrows sooner than Cousin Ann. Did any young people come to our house as visitors, it was one of my first thoughts for their pleasure to take them to see Cousin Ann. Who of the privileged cannot recall those evenings, the never-to-be-forgotten book of fortune, the raspberry vinegar and delicious cake, and above all the society of Ann herself replete with stories of her younger days."

I quote at length from Mrs. Wheeler's letter, because I believe that many a child and young person will see their own experience reflected in what she says. Mrs. Hayes liked to see every one about her happy ; she was very indulgent to the boys who visited her : there are stories that they

even went so far as to throw biscuits at one another without remonstrance from the gentle hostess! One who called upon her on a stormy winter night tells that from the kitchen came sounds of a great frolic. Mrs. Hayes gently opened the slide from the china closet into the kitchen, where behold was a wonderful pyramid of boys, Will Wheeler, the Toffey cousins, and that little elf, Walter Hunter, dancing on top! A soft little laugh and the gleam in her eyes showed that her heart was as young as theirs.

She was one of the rare persons who always have something ready to give, at times being generous almost to a fault. Her book of valued recipes had become quite dilapidated through long years of use and the girls decided to copy it into a new book for her. The work was nearly completed and Mrs. Hayes was displaying the neatly written pages to a visitor one day. The lady expressed such admiration of the book, that Mrs. Hayes presented it to her, and continued to use the old worn out copy herself.

She was able to enter into the feelings and life of young and old, rich and poor, with perfect understanding and grace, dig-

nified and at ease with persons of prominence and of high social position; never patronizing or condescending to those of humble birth and ways, who loved her and appreciated her unselfish and kindly interest in them and their affairs.

To her later years fell the care of her grand-nieces, Lily and Annie Thomas, a charge which she faithfully carried as all others that fell on her shoulders: and as she looks down from Heaven today she sees a woman in a noble profession, who owes her sweet, generous character and conscientious fulfillment of duty, largely to the influence of this great-aunt.

When she died, many felt as one strong man, often under her roof, expressed it,—

“I have lost the best friend I ever had.”

Mrs. Wallace writes of her: “We believe the tender care devoted to those nearest her is not lost; and in the possibilities of eternity may be needed in the hereafter.

“We fancy her awaiting them in the place prepared for her, a little apart from the innumerable company in bright array; perhaps in one of the

—“Palaces of ivory,
Its windows crystal clear.”

of which old Bonar quaintly sang. In the

light not of the sun, neither of the moon, we see her beyond the fields of fadeless asphodel, under the waving palms, beside the still waters bordered with silver lilies. These may be figures, but they bear a precious meaning to yearning hearts made for the deep household loves. The deepest experience of her life was disappointment; the law of her living was self denial; to minister, not to be ministered unto. She had looked through infinite sorrow and found infinite peace: unknown to herself, she was one of the great company scattered through the earth, who are priests unto God,—ministering between the divine One who has unveiled Himself unto them, and those who yet stand in the outer courts of the great sanctuary of truth and holiness. Her crown was of thorns; she walked the earth with bleeding feet, not comprehending the work she was doing, and faded from sight unnoticed by the great world, as a spent wave of the sea, leaving no sign save a soft imprint in the hearts that held her."

Yes—in the hearts that hold her yet, and gain inspiration for better living from the memory of this patient, hospitable, self-forgetting woman, who made "goodness a duty."

In her kitchen window grew a pot of lemon verbena: she loved to pick a sprig of this and carry it around with her; so the plant never grew very large. Her life was like this sweet, unassuming, lemon verbena, a fragrance we yet bear with us.

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